

Mrs. Kasay's story

From "The one who dries our tears: Stories from Ethiopia of religious leaders and people living with HIV/AIDS" by Trocaire/CAFOD/SCIAF 2011

Mrs Seamawit Kasay is a 24 year old mother of one. "I found out my status by accident", she says.

"I wasn't sick – I don't know what led me to go to the clinic. My brother is a soldier, and when I told him he said nothing. But when I told my sister, she cried."
Selamawit and her husband Desta were frightened of the consequence of talking to their priest, Father Yitbareak, and went first to talk to Kiros Tekelegiorgis, the leader of the choir.

"She is young and understanding, and other people living with the virus recommended that I talk with her first. She told me not to worry, that Father Yitbareak gives hope and encouragement, and doesn't bicker or discriminate."

"Selamawit is a very religious person", says Father Yitbareak. Yitbareak, the Administrator at the Golgota Medhani Alem Orthodox Church in Adigrat.

"I had been told in another church that I wasn't permitted to take part in Holy Communion because I was HIV positive", says Selamawit. "Father Yitbareak told me not to worry, so I take Holy Communion again now. He doesn't charge us church fees. He encouraged me not to fast, but to allow my body to heal."

Priests in Yitbareak's church visit sick people regardless of their faith, and Melakegent and colleagues in the Moslem, Orthodox and Catholic faiths have established an organization called, "Kaeka" to teach people about the virus. "We have to work together. We have to make sure that those who are not infected take proper precautions, and that those who are infected are assisted. Though we can't provide food or drink for all, we can give encouragement."

"We should not say 'this is my relative', or 'this is my countryman', or 'this is a stranger', says Father Melakegenet. "Rather we should help him or her because he or she is just human. We should help people without discrimination. The virus is not a sin. A child who knows nothing can get the disease while still in the womb – is the child a sinner?"